

Mayor and City Council of Cumberland

WORK SESSION

City Hall Council Chambers
57 N. Liberty Street
Cumberland, MD 21502

Tuesday, August 16, 2022, 5:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Raymond M. Morriss, President; Council Members: Richard Cioni, Eugene Frazier, Joe George, and Laurie Marchini.

ALSO PRESENT: Jeffrey Silka, City Administrator; Michael Cohen, City Solicitor; Marjorie Woodring, City Clerk

Media: Bryan Gowans – WCBC Radio

I. PUBLIC MEETING AGENDA REVIEW-AUGUST 16, 2022

Mr. Silka touched on some of the orders for tonight’s public meeting. He advised on the Sole Source purchase of water meters. He stated that the City is buying all the allotment of water meters for the year in one order, so as to not get caught up in supply chain issues. He added that they are handling the 6” PVC water pipe order somewhat the same way, since the price has gone up due to most of the components being shipped from Russia and Ukraine.

Mr. Silka reviewed Change Order No. 2 for the Decatur Street Project, saying it’s a time extension as well as a contract price increase due to problems with pipe fittings.

Mr. Silka advised on the Letter of Agreement for the African-American Heritage Grant, and stated that the City is going to assign the grant, that was originally assigned to the City in April 2021, to the Carver Center, pending state approval. Mr. Cohen stated that the Carver Board has already said that the Letter was satisfactory for their purposes.

Mr. Silka explained that for the \$30K forgivable loan for 432 N. Centre Street, the City is partnering with the County with Invest Allegany in a joint project for the renovation of that building to a mixed residential and commercial space.

Bryan Gowans inquired about the Quitclaim Bill of Sale transferring ownership of the Fayette Street Bridge from CSX to the City. Mayor Morriss advised that this was being done so that they can start winding their way through the federal process. He also stated that demolition has begun on 304 and 306 Fayette Street, and advised that federal cost is 80%, with the other 20% divided out.

Councilman George advised that he will recuse himself from the vote on Order No. 27062, since his wife serves as Treasurer of the Family Crisis Resource Center, and added that as a former employee of CBIZ, he will also be recusing himself from Order Nos. 27066, 27068, and 27072.

Councilwoman Marchini mentioned that she, too, will be recusing herself from each of the CBIZ Orders, as her husband is affiliated with CBIZ.

II. BOB KIRK INVITATIONAL SHOWCASE SPONSORSHIP

Mr. Silka advised that because of this sponsorship opportunity, the City had budgeted \$20K, but said he wanted to have a discussion with M&CC to see what level they are comfortable with. Mayor Morriss stated that since it's on ESPN they should sponsor to the greatest extent they can because it's unusual for the City to have this kind of opportunity.

Councilwoman Marchini stated that she is not comfortable with \$20K because the City also supports ACIT and BW Girls. She said wants to support because of the support the City gives the other tournaments, but stated that she thinks \$20K is a reach.

There was discussion about advertising and recognition that the higher level would bring. Councilman George suggested maybe sharing with Mountain Maryland and Allegany County, through their tourism, by splitting the ads. Councilwoman Marchini stated that last year there was no interest from the County. The rest of Council seemed to think that \$20K was too much, but liked the idea of partnerships to help cover the cost. Mayor Morriss stated he will reach out to ESPN for additional statistics regarding viewership.

It was noted ESPN needs to wrap things up, so there is a time constraint. Mr. Silka advised that he would reach out to the County, while Mayor Morriss stated that he will make some phone calls to the County, as well.

III. MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL UPDATES

Mayor Morriss advised that tonight they will be doing the awards for all the organizations, and provided a handout of all the recent events up for recognition. He discussed details of the ceremony, saying the hope was to not make it too long, and added that at the end they would take one big photo of everyone.

There was discussion about all of Council receiving complaints about Breezeline, particularly about their 800-phone line. It was suggested to send a letter to the local contact and the CEO indicating the City's dissatisfaction with their current service. Mr. Cohen advised that their franchise expired and negotiations did not end up in the contract.

The Mayor stated that without a service center in the City, service levels for the customers are basically non-existent. He said that everything M&CC can do, from letters to phone calls, needs to be done.

There was also discussion about telling Breezeline that the City is considering inviting in competitors. It was noted that there is nothing stopping competitors from coming in because it's non-exclusive, but demographics and the number of households in the area causes others to stay out of the market. Mayor Morriss stated that the City has to do anything in its power to let them know they are providing unacceptable service to the citizens of Cumberland.

Council discussed having Breezeline expand and establish a local service center. Mr. Silka advised that the cable industry as a whole is not expanding anywhere – it's not just small communities that are feeling it. He added that Verizon has actually stopped their expansions of Fios.

Mr. Cohen advised that the one big deterrent to having some other company come in is actually the non-exclusivity, because of competitors not wanting to share the market with Breezeline. He

explained that the lack of a current franchise is a big bargaining chip, and said the City can remove their lines out of the City's conduits and offer the franchise to another company.

Councilwoman Marchini advised on recent and upcoming downtown music and events, and mentioned the Whiskey Rebellion and Heritage Days coming up on September 9th, a new program highlighting a local business once a month, and a winter-themed window contest.

There was discussion about Heritage Days and the new format of bringing history back and how it adds a lot to the event.

Councilwoman Marchini advised that Ruth Davis-Rogers has been working hard trying to get Preservation Maryland here, and stated that there are two grants available in the historic district. She added that Ms. Davis-Rogers is planning a seminar with property owners to explain tax credits. Mayor Morriss gave kudos to Ms. Davis-Rogers for all her work and said it's creating a new perception for historic preservation in the City.

III. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business at hand, the meeting adjourned at 5:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Allison K. Layton
City Clerk

Minutes approved: December 6, 2022